



A MIDNIGHT TRAGEDY. THE CRIME OF THE BURNERS' OFFICE. W. E. MOTT.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Despite his resolution to appear brave, Kedge uttered a terrible cry. 'It's a lie! It's a lie! I know nothing about John Oakburn's murder!' he cried.

Paxton answered calmly. 'We know where you were every moment on the night of the murder, and you know it.' 'It's a lie! It's a lie! I know nothing about John Oakburn's murder!' he cried.

'Do you recognize this, Levi?' he asked, holding the bag up for Kedge's inspection. The prisoner's knees shook, and there was an awful expression of terror on his face.

'Ah, I see you do recognize this money-bag. Shall I tell you where it came from? It was in John Oakburn's little private safe until the night before his murder. Since Oakburn's murder I found this coin-bag in your room. You see, Levi, denial is useless. The proof is overwhelming.'

'You jeering devil!' cried Kedge, suddenly leaping up from the couch on the side of which he had been seated. It seemed that in the agony and madness of the moment he was about to attack the detective.

Paxton did not recoil, but his glittering, steady eyes met the prisoner's blazing orbs, and involuntarily Kedge sank back cowed by the power of the detective's gaze.

'Look here, Paxton,' he said presently, with a desperate effort at calmness. 'You have me in a tight place, I admit, but I didn't kill Oakburn, I swear I didn't; I'll take my oath I'm innocent, even on the gallows.'

To the detective's mind there returned the memory of the conversation he had had with the janitor and the janitor, when the former said she believed Levi had nothing to fear in consequence of Oakburn's murder, because he was not guilty.

The detective thought Judith was sincere in thinking thus, but the janitor's wild and all Paxton's clues seemed to indicate the fellow's connection with the crime.

'It is folly for you to thus protest your innocence. Your only hope is in a confession,' Paxton said. 'I tell you, once and for all, I have not John Oakburn's blood on my hands,' replied the janitor, again repeating his denial.

'Then it is useless to waste time with you; the law must take its course. But, by the way, Levi, where did you get the ten thousand dollars you thought of investing in Newburgh real estate?' asked Paxton.

The janitor's jaw fell. He tried to speak, but only an inarticulate sound emanated from his lips. He was momentarily stricken dumb, it seemed, by this sudden revelation that the detective knew what he must have regarded as a profound secret.

Paxton saw the impression he had made, and he followed it up. 'You little dream how well informed I am regarding your private affairs,' Levi, he said.

'I don't know what you mean. I am a poor man. I never had any money,' answered Kedge, at last. 'I know all about that. But tell me, what have you done with Marion Oakburn?'

'I know nothing about the girl. How should I?' 'Look here, Levi, your lies are wasted. I am the man who attempted to rescue Marion Oakburn from Malvin's Hotel. Now, mark my words, you infernal scoundrel, if that poor girl is harmed in any way, I shall exact a fearful retribution.'

below, and looking over the rail at the head of the stairs I saw Marion come out of the office with a pistol in one hand and a sheet of paper covered with writing in the other. I watched her and saw her steal up the stairs and enter her room where she concealed the pistol in the bottom of her trunk, and it is there now.

'After that she came to my room, and with pretended anxiety about her father induced me to go down to the office, where we found the old man dead. Now you know why I think Marion Oakburn is guilty.'

'Thus concluded Judith Kedge. 'It is all a clever invention, no doubt, and if there is a pistol in Marion Oakburn's trunk I suspect you put it there,' said Paxton.

'This is no more than I might have anticipated,' answered Judith, with a haughty air. 'While she was making her revelation, Stuart Harland was intensely agitated.'

'Thus far he had kept the secret, but he had seen Marion leave the office on the night of the murder, but now since the truth was revealed by the janitor's statement he felt that it was his duty to relate what he knew.'

'One moment, Mr. Paxton, I believe you are too hasty. I, too, have concealed a certain item of knowledge regarding this crime, because I did not wish to bring suspicion and disgrace upon one whom I believe to be innocent. Despite the evidence of my own sight, from my knowledge of her character, said Stuart Harland.

'This is becoming interesting,' said Paxton. 'Do you confirm this woman's story?' he demanded of Stanmore.

'Listen, sir,' answered Stuart, and then he went on to relate how on the night of the murder, as he was leaving the house just after the crime must have been committed, he saw Marion step out of the office with a paper in one hand, and something from which the light glinted as though it might have been reflected from a polished metallic surface in the other.

He also told how she had frightened Marion, looked, and how she had fled up the rear stairs. In conclusion he said: 'After all, I have so much confidence in Marion, as I have said, that I believe there is some explanation of her conduct yet to be made which will leave us all without doubt of her innocence.'

As Stanmore listened to Stuart Harland's story he uttered a groan and buried his face in his hands. Both Stuart and Paxton regarded him wondrously, and they asked themselves: 'What is Marion Oakburn to Mr. Stanmore?'

As Stuart concluded, Stanmore arose and he looked as though the room was stifling him, as though he could not breathe, and he went out reeling like a drunken man.

'Have I done right in telling all this?' asked Stuart of Paxton. 'You have. Justice demands that all possible light should be cast upon this case,' answered the detective.

Judith Kedge seemed delighted at Stuart's unexpected confirmation of her statement. 'Now you will believe me!' she cried. 'Yes, we believe your statement that you saw Marion Oakburn as described, but we do not yet admit her guilt as proven,' answered Paxton.

'If more evidence is wanted, it is furnished by her flight. She ran away because she became alarmed and feared she would be arrested,' continued Judith. 'And so you are guilty of compounding a felony, Miss Judith,' said Paxton suddenly.

'I—I don't comprehend.' 'I presume not. Let me refresh your memory. Marion Oakburn bribed you to keep it a secret that you saw her leave the office on the night of the murder.'

'No! No!' 'I know it is true. You wrung the last dollar she possessed from that poor girl, and I also suspect you compelled her to give you her jewelry.' 'It is false.' 'We have a faculty for making discoveries. I know all about your bank account, and I have seen Marion Oakburn's locket which was pawned by you.'

'I deny it.' 'It will do you no good to deny what we can prove. It is a criminal offense to compound a felony, or in other words to conceal a crime. If you expect any mercy at my hands, truthfully answer my questions. Do you know where Levi was at the time of the murder?'

'No, sir,' answered Judith. 'Do you know where Marion Oakburn is?'

'No.' Paxton reflected for a moment in this wise: 'Since she has a powerful motive in seeking to place the crime on some one besides her brother, were it not that Stuart Harland has confirmed her story, I should not credit it. And yet if Marion Oakburn is innocent, why did she bribe Judith to keep her secret?'

A Dead City of Cayton.

As I gazed, the moon rose slowly in the sky, a burnished shield of liquid light. Her long white rays glittered upon the solemn forest, and penetrated the far recesses of the hills, trailing a broad pathway of silver over the water till it was lost at last in the distant shadows of the mountain.

As if drawn by some spell, I walked slowly towards the lake till I stood at last on a rising ground that overlooked the broad still sheet of water. There, to the right, between the mountain and the shore, lay the ruins of the city of the long dead past. Flooded by the moonlight, it swam in a haze of glory, each mound of decaying stone crowned with trees, each crumbling wall clothed with a garment of nature's own providing. It was the very apotheosis of decay.

It had been no puny city. Far up the mountain's lower slope, far back to where the hills drew down to the shore, the long succession of its ruins extended—here in great shapeless mounds that stood alone, a few broken shafts and shattered pediments still standing out, clear, sharp-cut, and angular, in the silver light, there in the long ranges of crumbling walls, through which vast fig-trees shot up their wealth of leaves, that marked the course of some broad avenue which went on and on till it lost itself in the white distance. Lippincott's.

Curious Accident. Assistant Manager A. R. Dupern, of the Alameda, Oakland and Piedmont Street Railway Company, had his eyebrows, eyelashes and hair burned off, the result of a curious accident. Mr. Dupern was explaining to one of the employees in the company's powerhouse on Webster street, Alameda, a plan, the drawing of which he had in his hand. He referred to some changes to be made in the wires which conduct electricity in the cars. Mr. Dupern dropped a brass rule which he had in his hand. It fell upon a "live" wire. A flash of lightning instantly issued from the wire. It flamed up with such force as to set fire to the paper which Mr. Dupern was poring over. The workman fled.

A yell of agony from the assistant manager called the attention of other employees to the scene. They found Mr. Dupern writhing in pain. His eyebrows, eyelashes and portions of the hair around his face had been burned away. He could not see, and for a while he feared that his eyesight had been destroyed. Mr. Dupern's assistants put him in a carriage and brought him to the Receiving Hospital. There remedies were applied to the suffering man, and he soon found some relief.

Silk Manufacture. The manufacture of silk in the United States began less than forty years ago at Paterson, N. J., in a small room over a machine shop. The industry has grown to immense proportions, the factories occupying hundreds of acres, and their annual output of finished goods now amounts to \$20,000,000. The raw silk market of the world amounts to \$400,000,000 annually, one-quarter of which is imported into this country.

From the small beginning of two decades ago there are now 400 silk manufacturing establishments in operation. The 400 factories employed 51,000 people, and the annual wages paid was \$19,000,000. There were also fifty-two establishments for dyeing and finishing goods, with a capital stock of about \$2,500,000, paying \$1,254,798 in wages. We are now manufacturing every article made in older silk countries, and our goods are classed as fully equal to the foreign product. American inventive genius has wrought marvelous improvements in mechanism, speed and artistic effect. Improved machinery for the manufacture of silk, invented and made in a Connecticut firm, is being shipped to England, Russia, Switzerland and Japan, and is accorded a high standard of excellence.

Chameleon Spiders. An interesting instance of colored mimicry in spiders has been observed in the south of France. The spiders of that region when in search of prey hide in the convolvulus flowers. It has been noticed that a white variety of spider frequented the white flowers, a greenish colored variety made the green flowers his home, and a pink one lived principally in the pink flowers. The colors of the three varieties were at first supposed to be permanent, but it has recently been discovered that the color of any of these spiders changes within a few days if the insect be placed in the convolvulus of a different colored flower to that which he has been using as his home. Four spiders, pink, white, green and yellow in color, were all put in a box together, and within three days all were white.

Improving Honey. Honey could be immensely improved by the planting of the flowers known to yield a fine flavored nectar. Everyone knows the difference in the quality of the comb contents in different parts of the same country and in different regions. The Narbonne honey obtains its fine flavor by being harvested chiefly from labiate plants, such as rosemary, etc., and though it appears that the Maltese honey does not, as is often stated, owe its fine aroma to orange blossoms, the latter undeniably perfumes Greek honey.

The Coming Fruit Country. Oregon fruit-growers say that Oregon is to be the greatest fruit-growing State of the Union. One fruit expert says that Italian prunes grown in the Willamette Valley are superior to those grown in Italy. The climate, he says, is like the great fruit region of Asia Minor. One grower has planted about 15,000 prune trees in 150 acres in the Willamette, and it is said that prunes and other fruits are being planted in thousands of other farms. That part of the State promises to be a vast fruit orchard in the near future.

The total production of grain in the United States this year is placed at \$527,279,900 bushels, an increase over the yield of 1894 of 1,091,360,000 bushels. English farmers may well conclude that their best plan is to emigrate to America, for competition is no longer possible in their occupation.

The man who undertakes to get a living by his wits would have a more regular supply of bread if he would depend more on his muscle.

CHAPTER XXVII. 'Mr. Stanmore, you forget yourself, said Paxton, and then to Judith Kedge: 'Go on, give us the proof of this incredible accusation of yours.'

'I will tell you all,' replied the woman. 'On the night of the murder I was ill, and I left my room at about 1 o'clock and went to Marion's room to procure some medicine. To my surprise I found her sitting in her room. I heard a sound below, and looking over the rail at the head of the stairs I saw Marion come out of the office with a pistol in one hand and a sheet of paper covered with writing in the other. I watched her and saw her steal up the stairs and enter her room where she concealed the pistol in the bottom of her trunk, and it is there now.'

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